

Bentley Mays
July 4, 1919 – May 23, 1994

Born on the 4th of July in Barbourville, Kentucky, to Woodson Mays, little Bentley Tip Mays was destined to become a horseman. By the time he was 15, he had joined his dad at Minton Hickory Farm, where he not only learned lessons from his talented father, but also Jim B. Robertson, Bob McCray and Johnny Lucas, Sr. It was during this time that he met and married the love of his life, Jewel Cloud.

As the Saddle Horse business declined during World War II, Bentley sought work in the Kentucky coal mines, but he didn't waste any time in returning to the horse world as soon as the war came to a close. 1945 found Bentley in Tennessee at the renowned Ridgefield Farm, where his association with Garland Bradshaw began. He and Garland left Ridgefield in 1946 for Danville, Kentucky, where they trained Kate Shriver, Lady Carrigan and Ridgefield's Genius, among others.

After seven years with Garland, Bentley went to work with Walter Murphy at the famed Knowlton Farm in Delaware, Ohio. Bentley received his first chance to ride finished horses, in addition to starting youngsters, from Walter.

The remainder of his training years were spent with Happy Valley Farm in Danville, Kentucky, until they dispersed in 1992. For twenty years Bentley's brother, Don Mays, was his right hand and assistant. Bentley created successful show horse after successful show horse at Happy Valley, including: Marguerite Denmark, Starheart's Daughter, Main Dame, Wings of Fortune, Tender Tears, Bernadette, Main Glitter, Northern Event, Party Train, Sweet Return, Short Street and a host of other winners.

Breeding shed decisions were also Bentley's forte and the broodmare band included: Dame of Fortune, Starheart's Daughter, Daughters Daughter, Giggles, Third Daughter, Rubia, and Danville Debutante, to name but a few.

Bentley's life in Danville included his beloved First Baptist Church, where he was a deacon and a member of the Male Chorus for years. The Mays family was a cornucopia of devoted and talented horsemen, and his brother-in-law, Joe Cloud, continues the family tradition today.